

Utopía y Subversión, by Eduardo Subirats, 1974—Part I, “Fourier or the World as Voluptuousness”

Translation in progress, by Lee

A Very Short Translator’s Introduction:

This is the first of a four-part, 70-page essay that I’m actively working on translating. In the table linked to below, you can find each paragraph, numbered, in Spanish, English, and with columns including questions and alternate translation options, and a column for adding reader’s questions and comments:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1uTJUX9xx9ownhDXoFNU6HBnT0X0IGkt3R0o-UV3ivIU/edit?usp=sharing>

Eduardo Subirats was in contact with the Situationists, as can be seen from Debord’s correspondence. He wrote a preface for a Spanish edition of Situationist texts, and wrote various articles on the Situationist International in a magazine called “El Viejo topo” (“The Old Mole”). *Utopía y Subversión* is the most intelligent and extensive discussion of radical takes on psychoanalysis, including Wilhelm Reich—which Subirats connects with Charles Fourier—that I’ve seen from a situationist-informed perspective. Part I is largely focused on Fourier.

Subirats has written many, many books. He co-authored *Enlightenment in an Age of Destruction: Intellectuals, World Disorder, and the Politics of Empire*, with Christopher Britt, Paul Fenn. That is the only work by him—to my knowledge—that has been translated to English.

There are a few significant passages by Subirats translated to English in “Jacques Camatte and the Missing Link of Contemporary Social Criticism,” by F. Corriente. That was what brought Subirats to my attention and F. Corriente kindly gave me *Utopía y Subversión*. The entire essay in Spanish can be found here:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Bt9tENP_D-w9KL0UItmtPACFS9sh9yLi/view?usp=sharing

I. Fourier or the World as Voluptuousness

What is utopia? An unrealized but achievable dream. Joseph Déjaque.

Fourier's dream awakens a bit of a smile; his fabulous social constructions produce an intimate fascination. His work seems to unlock mysteries that have no name; and you can almost agree with him: the discovery of the New World of Love - as his *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle* announces – makes the 400,000 volumes of philosophy that preceded it seem ridiculous.

Invent a new world that corresponds to the music of passions—that would be Fourier's motto if his discovery had a program. But first you should ask yourself whether Fourier's work is a discovery, a fiction, a politics, or a vision. What does it mean to read Fourier? It seems, indeed, that his "volumes" hint at a universe of paranoid fantasies, of chimeras, as Simone Debout says. And there is little doubt that Fourier belongs to the lineage of the great visionaries, of Blake or Swedenborg, of Strindberg or Schreber. On the other hand, and like the latter two, it is presented as an extravagant precursor of a great politics, artistic and experimental, passionate and non-moralist (like that of the Dadaists, Hugo Ball for example, a politics that was the heir to modern art, as socialism had been of idealism in philosophy): this would be the meaning of the paranoid activism of desire in Fourier.

Fourier gladly compares his destiny with that of the Renaissance navigators. Like them, he is seized by the vertigo of discovery; and he shares their stubbornness to trace the ends of the universe, its limit. Fourier would therefore be a discoverer, the discoverer of the New World. What's more, he only speaks to us from this universe of love: as someone who, apparently lost in an unknown land, understood perfectly from there that the world was unfailingly getting lost; like an apostle who announced to us from three thousand feet up that we need to undo everything, "forget everything learned,"; we need an "*écart absolu*."¹

But the New World of Love is not, strictly speaking, an "other" world; the passionate universe of Harmony does not confront capitalist civilization, which was just being born, as its radical other. Nor can it truly be said that Fourier's work is a utopia, that it lacks place and history in this world. In a general way, the trip, the discovery, the vision or the dream, even the fantasies that surrounded the daily life of this almost autistic dreamer, are only the means in which his fundamentally inventive preoccupation unfolded. Because Fourier is, above all, an inventor: he does not imagine the Best. Still less does he project it into a superhistorical sky. Rather he invents it, builds it. The metaphor of the discoverer lost in a non-existent world mingles with that of the master in his workshop, forging, or better, conjuring up the world like a passionate ingenuity. Fourier's mania, in effect, was combinatorial calculus with some irreducible variants that are, precisely, the passions, the tree of passion. It was the mania of manias and passion of passions. The combination was the secret of a world created in and by desire, that which conjugates the passions, arranges them in an indefinite game of infinite voluptuousness.

[1. The Fourierian Conception of Desire]

¹ Translator's note: a term from Fourier that has often been commented on, "*écart absolu*" is variously translated as "absolute divergence" (Rosemont, 1976) or "total refusal" (LaCoss, 2003). A more literal rendering might be "absolute deviation." I propose "total break".

An original conception of desire is what allows Fourier to invent the new passionate world, bring it to light, discover it, and launch from it fierce diatribes against the civilization that he denigrates. What is the peculiarity of desire in Fourierian cosmology? It is not that Fourier defines a specific conception of desire, and it is hardly possible to attribute to him a theory of the passions. He only combines them, uses them as the blocks of an unusual construction, as the monads of a previously veiled cosmos. In any case, the mere fact that desire is that with which a world, a society, a human existence, after all, is built, composed and constituted, already suggests some features of this conception.

However, it seems necessary that this conception of desire be detached from the cultural context with which Fourier's work is confronted and in which it stands out paradigmatically. This can be extended to all thought and culture that, since the Enlightenment, celebrated the cult of instrumental reason, exalted in a Faustian way the kingdom and glory of work and idolized the progress of history. This confrontation, on the other hand, seems all the more justified since Fourier himself lodges, so to speak, on the edge of civilization, at a point of rupture with respect to civilization's whole continuity. It is the *écart absolu*, the extension of Cartesian doubt to the whole of civilization. Nothing is more imperative for Fourier than abandoning, disentangling, distancing himself from history, as well as from the well-known and established sciences, abstracting from all things². And in this sense, too, Fourier shares the fate of modern navigators: it is necessary to abandon this world, to move beyond its shores, in order to be able to bring back precious exotic and unknown species. In this rupture, in this grasping of the extremes, in this exploration of the ends of the earth, resides the radicalism of Fourier, a radicalism that does not consist so much in penetrating to the very root of things, as in uprooting them and taking them to the extreme of the possible.

In the Preliminary Discourse to the Encyclopedia, D'Alembert recounts that, in order to gather exhaustive empirical material and write the technical articles of the Encyclopedia based on it, Diderot visited the artisan workshops of Paris one by one, making sketches, describing and recording the production processes, methods, instruments and tools, the secrets, in short, of the mechanical arts. "Everything led us, then," comments d'Alembert, "to turn to the workers." This tiny anecdote—and, nevertheless, important: technical rationality, the work of the worker, determined in terms of content the rationality of progress and the progress of history, from the Encyclopedia to Hegel and even Marx—illustrates an aspect, essential from all points of view, that distinguishes Fourier. And it also illustrates, in its own way, the polemic that Fourier explicitly addresses against the spirit of the Enlightenment. Well, according to him, there was nothing to look for near the workers, in the crucibles of repugnant work. This despite the fact that he never stopped defining the kingdom of Harmony as an industrial order. Neither economics nor politics nor industrial arts nor mechanical inventions could reveal the secret of a true golden age. The keys to its doors are kept rather by desire, the irreducible multiplicity of passions, even those that are said to be antisocial.

Fourier opposes the economic to the passionate, the libidinal; voluptuousness is injected into work; the flights of reason in history are dismantled by virtue of the fantasies of desire. It is what allows you to reveal the lights of enlightened reason to be a night of "dense darkness."

Desire is always the key to the Fourierian universe: it constitutes both the agent, the productive factor of the new passionate wealth and the new societal order, as well as the axis that sustains the critique and

² Cf. the edition of Fourier by M. Gras, *La armonía pasional del nuevo mundo*, Taurus, Madrid, 1972, p. 30.

dismantling of the libidinal poverty of this world. In this nuclear role of desire the problem of the *écart absolu* is solved, in it the originality of his Fourierian conception is coded, as it also determines its actuality. Perhaps something more can be added in this regard. If desire is what allows unraveling the misery that underlies the splendor of reason, while building and affirming, really producing another world and another type of human than now exists, this means that one can distinguish a critical, negative dimension, and another constructive and affirmative dimension, in Fourier. The first allows us to redefine and reformulate the terms of a critique of culture, while the second presumes on its horizon the traces of a Great, libidinal, experimental and subversive politics. In any case, and as far as Fourier's criticism is concerned, we will refer here to two concepts that occupy a central place in his work, that of civilization and that of work.

[2. Civilization and Work]

The concept of civilization³ is an Enlightenment concept, and Fourier's critique of it is fully inserted in his break with the spirit of the Enlightenment. But it is necessary to specify the meaning that this word had. Indeed, from Mirabeau to German idealism, civilization was not conceived as a state, nor as the set of material elements of social production and reproduction; more than a structure, it was a process. This process of "humanization", to use Hegel's words, basically consisted of a specific subjection, a softening and a specialization of human sensory powers. Naturally, this non-substantive meaning of the word civilization refers to the reverse, the negative side, exiled, if you will, of the determination of the historical reason for progress; it refers, in other words, to his flesh and his blood, to its repercussions in the order of sensibility and desire; Finally, it alludes to this side of imagination and fantasy that the philosophy of history, from Vico to Hegel, subordinated to the activity of instrumental reason, to man's technical control over things.

Kant is perhaps the one who most firmly formulates this coercive, codifying and repressive connotation of civilization as a process of *Zivilisierung*, since in fact it is he who combines the celebration of enlightened reason, this threshold of humanity's adulthood, with a rigorist⁴ morality. In this regard, his positions are unequivocal when, for example, he expresses his total aversion for a philosophy of history like Herder's in that it is anarchic, having a defense of life and the joy of jouissance as an end in itself, and an apology for the irreducible reality of desire⁵. And Kant is equally unequivocal in overcoming Rousseau's opposition between nature and culture: he has left behind the bucolic image of an originally harmonious relationship between man and nature. The innocent happiness of Petrarch's pastoral life is for him nothing but a sweet dream, without temporality or history. The historical is opposed to desire, which, in its pure given existence, does not suppose more than eternal passivity, if not regression to a wild and ahistorical state. Properly human progress requires rather, in Kant's own words, that "reason

³ Cf. about the word "civilization". E. Benveniste, *Problèmes de linguistique générale*, Gallimard, Paris, 1966, pp. 336 y ss.

⁴ [Translator's note] The word which Subirats uses, "rigorista," is probably the direct cognate of "rigorist," a very uncommon word in English deriving from Rigorism, defined according to Collins English Dictionary as follows. In British English:

1. strictness in judgment or conduct
2. the religious cult of extreme self-denial
3. Roman Catholic theology: the doctrine that in cases of doubt in moral matters the stricter course must always be followed

⁵ J. G. Herder, *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, Berlín, 1914, p. 100.

impels man to bear patiently the toils he hates, to pursue the glittering tinsel of jobs he detests, to forget the death that terrifies him"⁶. Here is what defines civilizing work. It may be that, in such functions, reason does not always play a brilliant role. Society does not stop being contradictory because its cultural ideals are conciliatory. But the occasional rebellion of a stifled desire against this impulse of "inexorable" reason, as Kant describes it, what else does it mean, from this perspective, if not a regression to a barbaric and inhuman state? Since desire is null, their insurrection is vain. It is not in desire that the weapons of a fight for something better should be invested, but in the civilizing role of reason, whose conflicts, wherever they arise, are rather the symptom of a civilization that is not fully consummated than the consequence of its repressive premises. Like the Platonic utopia, the philosophy of progress could not lend its ears to the seductions of music.

Fourier's critique insinuates itself against the grain of this perspective of the philosophy of history. For now, precisely that same aspect stands out, namely, civilizing activity as a process that is imprinted in the order of desire, in the body, as a moral law, as well as a physiological hierarchization. And through this twist that Fourier operates, his critique is introduced or inferred in and through desire. However, it is necessary to consider first the problem of work.

It is, of course, work in its rather economic or economic-political meaning, as a human activity that produces reality. Work thus conceived constitutes the objectification of the spirit or the fulfillment of its faculties in the sense of the Kantian *Vermögen*. As such, it appears fundamentally as a legislating power, a pure activity that forms and transforms the world, and that confronts nature as an inert and amorphous matter, devoid of any other quality than that of passive resistance.

But the nature of work is not only made of this facet that concerns the object, the "subsistence" of things. There is also another aspect, a subjective, humanist and humanizing dimension. It is, in a few words, the spiritual function of work⁷ as a principle of human individuation and subjectivation, or, if one prefers to use the Marxian formula derived from classical German philosophy, as a principle of man's self-realization. The importance of this subjective task of work cannot be doubted, since it essentially determines the notion of modernity. Faust and Prometheus, as fundamental myths of this civilization, converge in this spiritual and historical-universal dimension. Its origin can be traced back to the Renaissance (one must think particularly of Vico, his glorification of activity, of human production and creation as the only reality), the historical moment that saw the joint emergence of the reign of individuality and industriousness.

What does this spiritual dimension consist of, however? It is first worth stressing the inseparability of these two aspects of the formative activity, of *Bildung*. Its objective function and its spiritual transcendence are two sides of the same coin. In short, it could be said that just as, on the side of the object, work appears as the legislating power of the world, it also becomes, on the subject's side, a codifying and hierarchizing action of the spiritual, ethical, individual identity. Furthermore, work (and otherwise, the latter ineluctably refers to idealist philosophy as a reflection on the "work" of reason) is what articulates the differentiation and confrontation of a subject and an object.

The question of the how this individuation process, this constitution of this historical and ethical identity, occurs is central to the libidinal critique of culture. It is also so in the Fourierian conception of civilization

⁶ I. Kant, *Filosofía de la historia*, Ed. Nova, Buenos Aires, 1964, p. 125.

⁷ E. Cassirer, *Filosofía de las formas simbólicas*, F. C. E., México, 1971, t. II, p. 254 y ss.

and in his utopia of the World of love. It can be objected, without a doubt, that considering this individuation only from the point of view of work, of training activity, only leads to a very one-sided image of this process. Such a limitation is justified, however, by the thematic demarcation that has been established in this context, specifically the confrontation that is posed here, under the pretext of Fourier's libidinal utopia, between the economic-political and the economic- libidinal (which can be prolonged in the confrontation between political economy and madness, as, at least obliquely, outlined in the last chapter). It is also justified by a controversy, implicit in these lines in a way, around the dialectical conception of the self-constitution of man as a process that necessarily happens through work, and therefore around a concept of revolution or political praxis essentially dependent on the humanist dialectic of servitude and work. For this purpose, it is necessary to indicate the moments that determine this spiritual function of work, or that sustain, in short, this legislation and articulation of the human individual as an ethical and historical subject. For this, Fourier will be appealed to here in a specific sense.

Indeed, what in any case should be considered as its utopian representation, seems to propose an economic model, a production system, in which the productive activity of people unfolds in a transsubjective and passionate context. It is the phalanstery as the organizational molecule of Harmony. In it, passion, the only factor of production and the only wealth, goes through the individual and dismantles it. The phalanstery could be defined, in accordance with these two premises, as the infinite multiplicity of combinations of the passions, of the passionate branches, in a trans-individual and non-subjectivized nexus. The phalanstery is nothing more than the immanent field in which desire unfolds, "perverting" its subjective hierarchy and fixation in its very production of voluptuousness.

[3. Individuation, Instincts, Destiny]

As will be seen later, that part of Fourier that goes beyond pure utopian representation of the Best, the hypostasis of a dream, mediocre but happy, in an anti-historical horizon, is the insinuation or awakening of passions as a force capable of dismantling, of subverting that cultural identity of the individual. It is a meaning that is not completely alien to psychoanalysis, or at least to a possible reading of it, under the sign of the liberation of the id, of the becoming id of the Self. In the present context, however, it is necessary to dwell on these aspects, the one that concerns the principle of ego individuation and the one that refers to the destiny of the passions, as the two moments that determine what has been previously called the spiritual function of work. Moreover, it will be necessary to consider these two aspects, individuation and instinctual destiny, as the two coordinates that preside over this function, two coordinates whose respective projections outline the reality of a counterfeit body, converted into the cunning of reason, and of a life degraded to mere survival, to pure support of the work of history.

Broadly speaking, the principle of individuation contained in work has previously been alluded to especially on the subjective repercussions of the legislative action on the natural world. What, from the point of view of the object, is apprehension and mastery of nature, from the point of view of the subject is ego codification of the body. The alienation accomplished in work, in the Hegelian sense of the objectification of the subject, is coextensive with the alienation of its support as subject. It is the same process that has been described a thousand times in relation to the origins of the machine and mechanism: its functional unity supposes, at the same time that it conditions, the instrumental functional unity of the same body. For it is necessary that from the multiplicity of operations and the diversity of directions in which human activity expands, a unitary and coherent structure emerges that encompasses them synthetically. In a general sense, this subjectification coincides with the Kantian Ego to the extent

that it is the empty unit of a form, the primordial synthetic unit that is superimposed on work in its broadest sense of activity of the Spirit on the natural world.

The process of subjectivation is not carried out, however, on a purely formal level. The immediate reality of life, desire, participates in it as a material background or formless vehicle of energy. It is from this point of view that work, the legislating activity of the world, also appears as a libidinal, passionate manifestation. Desire coexists in and with it, intervenes, finally, in the production process. But it coexists in a channeled, repressed, violated form. Work as a legislating activity, forming the thing, supposes, at the same time that it establishes, a certain discipline, channeling and coercion of the physical or libidinal energy that participates in it as a vital manifestation. Under this aspect it appears as the great educator of man, the very principle of humanization, to the extent that it imprints for man a specific physiological organization, a hierarchization of the organs, a specialization of the senses. In the same way that it forms the thing, it also forms the desire that is the energetic background of its activity. Considered as bodily activity, it is the result of the repressive organization, of the imprint that it stamps on the body. From the point of view of the activity that forms the thing, legislating and producing a human world, it is the beginning of this violence and coercion on desire, on the non-organized body that transports energy⁸. And in this physiological order that it imposes on the body is summed up, in short, its spiritual task, its cultural function.

In the same way that the Kantian *a priori* revealed the subjectifying function of work, the Hegelian *Selbst* reveals the instinctual dimension linked to this subjectivation. In this regard, there is hardly any doubt about the repressive and servile morality that the dialectic advocates. Like a modernized ascetic, the Hegelian worker has no worse enemy than his own flesh. To subjugate it is the highest task of culture, of the dialectic of history. The slave only become a subject, an autonomous consciousness in and for himself, after a victorious fight to the death against it. Hegel's importance does not lie, in this sense, in discovering work as that activity through which man realizes himself as a spiritual individuality - as Marx thought - but in having unraveled the activity of the form and, with it, the essence of culture, as a process of denial of desire, of muzzling the body; in having unequivocally demonstrated how the economic-political is superimposed on the economic-libidinal, strangling and suffocating it.

Fourier diametrically inverts this philosophy of culture and history. He does not work out culture from the point of view of the flight of reason, but from the servitude of desire. It installs itself in the shadows and in the night, in what civilization represses. Only thus can Fourier denounce the unfolding of progress as a regression of desire.

Such a point of view does not seem so new today after the philosophy of technique has highlighted the constant interaction between a certain degree of technical development of a culture and the prevailing and privileged forms of the organization of desire. In this sense, it seems necessary to mention the interpretation of the myth of the mermaids developed in an early work of the Frankfurt School, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*⁹, precisely because it introduces into this relationship between technique and the cultural hierarchy of desire. a central motif in Fourierian criticism: the dialectic between historical progress and libidinal regression.

The passage from The Odyssey about the mermaids and the cunning of Circe indeed contains an illustrative character with regard to the critique of the work. Basically, the fight between Ulysses and the sirens highlights the historical destiny of reason and progress as the violence exerted on a body that strips it of its feeling. A cowardly hero, Ulysses pays for the success of his enterprise and the luck of his expedition at the price of a brutalized body. The suffocation of desire is the miserable secret of cunning

⁸ Cf. in this regard, the interpretation of the Freudian notion of "represión", in G. Simondon, *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, Aubier Montaigne, París, 1969, pp. 59 y ss.

⁹ Adorno, Horkheimer, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, Amsterdam, 1947, pp. 48 y ss.

that Circe advises. As in the Hegelian dialectic, it is from desire that the identity of the subject is differentiated and formed. From the Dionysian ecstasy of the song of the sirens emerges the ego as a moral being, self-responsible and self-conscious, identical with the historical enterprise that defines it. So great is the debasement of desire that is demanded. For it only achieves its independence and its lordship by muzzling itself, imprisoning its senses, drowning that song of hell, childhood and madness, until it is reduced to silence.

It is hardly necessary to point out the link between this scene and the problem of work and its cultural function: here, once again, it is presented as the means, result and end of this coercion of desire. The very premise of progress manifests itself as a broken body, tied to its instruments. However, this episode reveals another aspect that leads directly to a central Fourier motif: silence.

[4. Sensibility Muted]

This silence of a muted desire seems to configure an exterior space, the "outside" or "below" of the current repressive form of libidinal organization. What could be called the technological and instrumental projection on the economic-libidinal (if the codification and subjection of desire were not, in turn, the condition of the instrumental activity itself) imprints a moral order on the body, a law, depriving it of those seductions of music which, however, belong to it. As the reverse, otherness or shadow of this anesthetized body, music or its silence appears. This connection could be made in the terms of the modern analysis of technical civilization. All technology, in effect, presupposes a certain hierarchy of the organs, a certain physiological order, the privilege of some zones of sensitivity with respect to others and, finally, the subordination of some third parties. The category of "unconscious" under the peculiar meaning that McLuhan gives to this word, for example, seems to coincide with this exile and this anesthesia of the senses that *The Odyssey* narrates¹⁰. That unconscious would thus cover the muted sensibility that a historical form of economic production stifles.

But can one speak of this Dionysian, frenzied or infernal state as part of the past? Of a desire not subordinated to the law, to a gagging, like a forgotten original state? Like an secret or subterranean level of reality? As a radical otherness?

These questions touch on an important problem of Fourier's thought, about its very character as a utopia. For if it were really a question of this otherness, of this "underlying" existence of desire, we would have to admit Fourier's model or social mechanism of the instincts as represented, the utopian image of the Best hypostatized in a suprahistorical or ahistorical dream. If desire is nothing more than the other of political economy, of history, of social institutions, Fourier's world of passion, the model of a free unfolding of passions and tastes, could only constitute a dream outside of historical time and space.

In this regard, the aforementioned passage from *The Odyssey* offers a suggestive vision. It is true that in it everything seems to revolve around an unscrupulous violence on desire. But, in the final analysis, it is not the song of the sirens that is silenced; it is the ears that are silenced with wax. Ulysses' cunning does not affect the very intensities of the music, it only numbs the body to its seductions. It is true that in it everything seems to revolve around an unscrupulous violence on desire. But, in the final analysis, it is not the song of the sirens that is silenced; it is the ears that are silenced with wax. And not by muzzling it does it stifle the ecstasy, the intoxication of its cadences. The violence exercised upon the body must only imprint a moral order, a coercive physiological organization that blinds it to the voluptuousness of its pure intensities. Thus, the desire is oppressed, but not suppressed. The sirens are still present, and not only because they can be seen in passivity forced by the moorings. Their song coexists with this enslaved body, already insensitive to the fascination it awakens. And it coexists precisely in the midst of silence; that silence that, as Kafka said, is the most powerful weapon of sirens.

¹⁰ M. McLuhan, *La galaxia Gutenberg*, Aguilar, Madrid, 1967, p. 338.

Desire does not constitute, then, an outside with respect to the coercive order of the body that the morality inherent to work supposes. Silence subsists alongside imprisoned desire. It is neither a prior state nor does it configure an underlying layer, rather it is prolonged in the very immanence of the gestures of work that choke it.

This consideration is important regarding Fourier. For the passions, those irreducible monads from whose infinite combination, from whose *clinamen*, results the passionnal Harmony of the new industrial and societal world, are not enclosed in an original essence of man outside temporality and history, they do not constitute a hidden *Urmensch* buried under an alienated social context. There are no "fundamental instincts", to paraphrase Ernst Bloch, but only a historical destiny of the drives¹¹.

Desire is social, political, economic, or it is nothing. So also in Fourier. And this is all the more essential, since only this coextension with a system of socialization or with a form of economic production allows him to conceive desire as a force capable of disrupting the moral order of work and civilization, and no longer just transgressing its law, but dismantling and subverting it.

Even under a contorted and muzzled form, the branches and divisions of the of passionnal tree are imbricated in a specific way with social instances, with processes of production and reproduction. The destiny of the drives suffers the same fate as the latter. An atrocious fate, without a doubt, in a world that only knows how to "intelligently wound the senses." But, in the end, a political, social and economic destiny. A given form of production supposes the channeling, direction and synthesis of this multiplicity, irreducible in itself, of passions around those that a culture sanctions or privileges. Only the socially productive passions achieve actual development, says Fourier. As for the others, hampered by this same cultural sanction, by the practical imperatives of the production of the real, they only manifest themselves in an imperfect form and attain only a "vicious development." Their fate is not so much that of repression, in the Hegelian sense of suppression and overcoming, as that of simple marginalization on the same plane of social production. Everything happens as if on a surface phenomenon in which the demands of work, as a productive activity and a civilizing function, demarcate the socially useful libidinal flows, separating them from those other forces and tendencies that go beyond the tasks of cultural formation. The fate of these latter drive tendencies will be lamentable. Branded as antisocial, and no longer by the "ideological superstructure" but in the very material base of production, they become the "vices" of a culturally sanctioned nature that culture is forced to repress. To a certain extent, the image of civilization that Fourier proposes recalls the psychoanalytic conception of the polymorphous body, the plurality of partial drives not "centralized" nor subject to "an organized tyranny", on which the process of socialization imprints a centralized order, an end and an organizing principle, that is to say, a perverse organization in the generic sense of this word¹². And just as the partial drives of infantile sexuality constantly threaten to dismantle the centralized organization of so-called mature sexuality, to unleash it and thus return to the partial organs their full rights, so too, for Fourier, these drives banished or marginalized by a given economic system, degraded to "vices" of nature, constitute the perennial force that intimates the subsistence of a culture, of a system of socialization, of a mode of production of the real. The silence of the sirens also threatens in its daze the Dionysian frenzy capable of ruining Ulysses' enterprise. This muzzled libido, this muted song, thus constitutes the limit of a civilization, of a system of socialization, a limit, moreover, inscribed in its very basis of production. It is only necessary to untie those ties, to restore this partiality of a non-hierarchical desire, to open to its possible developments, as Fourier says, the passions that civilization blocks... and this system of production, this work of reason and progress will collapse, will burst into pieces. It is only necessary to inject into the system of material production those impulses that culture has discarded, to break the floodgates that preserve the hierarchization and privileging of certain strata of human sensibility. That same desire, once muzzled or suffocated, will thus rip apart the whole of culture, dismember the historical continuum that sustains it and will introduce

¹¹ Ernst Bloch, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt, 1959, t. I, p. 75.

¹² S. Freud, *Introducción al psicoanálisis*, en *Obras completas*, La España Moderna, Madrid, 1948, t. II, p. 225.

through that gap a new light. It is the splendor of a limitless voluptuousness that joyfully makes the visionary announcement of the new societal industry, the new factories of passion that will convey pure intensities of desire as the only force of production and the only economy.

[5. The Rejection of Temporality]

Fourier's world of love is not at all a return to an original, forgotten but happy state, a return to a "Rousseauian" nature. The grandeur and chaos of the perversion native to desire, of infantile polymorphism in the Freudian sense, is what is found in the principle of his "utopia". But within a certain perspective that does not mean regression to a past, nor illusion in a chimerical but possible future. The return to the past is contrary to the very spirit of utopia. As for the concern for a better future, the progressive march in time, the thirst for tomorrow, Fourier dismisses it as a vain fantasy. Desire, he says in the *Warning to the Civilized*, does not know tomorrow, at least it does not know it without becoming adulterated with it (this is also one of the aspects of his critique of work as postponed desire). The future is the temporality of servitude. This rejection of temporality that properly corresponds to utopia can be explained if we take into account this coextension and coexistence of desire, in its polymorphous, convulsive, even chaotic form, with the body tied to the instruments and tasks of the work of history. If desire is directly social and historical its presence can only reveal itself on the immanent plane of social institutions, of the forms of production and reproduction of the real, in the here and now. The frenetic drunkenness of music is simultaneous to the asphyxiating monotony of the rhythms of production. Desire, the irreducible unities of the polymorphous body, that is, what corresponds to Fourier's tree of passion, also participates in the petrified gestures of work or daily life, of social, political, economic instances. It participates in them as the Spinozian substance participates in their attributes on the same plane coextensive to both.

The question posed by Fourier, indeed, the nodal problem in which his real construction of a libidinal world is based, is that of how this virtually present background of a non-subjective and asocial polymorphous desire can come to crack the floodgates that suffocate it in the heart of civilization, can overturn the order of social production as a repressed libidinal organization, dismantling it, and thus acquire a current development through the interstices that its very force has broken open.

For this, desire must be determined as an active, transforming force, capable of bursting from within its interior, against the cultural limits of permitted sensuality. Desire, according to Fourier, and precisely in its current antisocial forms, in its polymorphousness, tends in the civilized realm to destroy that fragmentation on which the political-economic is founded. It is what defines its "subversive order", the chaos of passions to which material progress ineluctably tends.

This determination of desire as an essentially subversive and countercultural energy is closely related to two already established libidinal utopias: Quincey's and Sade's. *The Society of the Friends of Crime*¹³ coincides, in effect, with Fourier¹⁴ in investing desire with that force that, beyond cultural sanctions and the material requirements of productivity, is capable of erecting a social universe on its own. The fact that the criminal communities of the Sadian libertines or of Quincey's passionate murderers acquire, in turn, a parasitic status with respect to established society, that they are erected only as a counter-society, and also assume a hierarchical or even initiatory organization, does not prevent them from constituting perfect models of an inter-individuality founded on the free flows of polymorphous desire, of a social economy based on the overflow of the axioms that a culture imprints on desire. Madness and immorality, perversion as a return to a pure infantile state realized under the sign of progress, the dismemberment of an order that maintains the former in a state of simple virtuality, all this acquires in these transsubjective passionnal combinations the character of an anarchic, antisocial and non-dialectical politics: the politics of the economic-libidinal. The same can be said of Fourier. In him, desire fuels everything except the

¹³ Translator's Note: this is a secret society of transgressives described in Sade's *Juliette*.

¹⁴ Klossowski, "Sade et Fourier", en *Topique*, núms. 4-5, París, 1970.

representation of a better future. He does not propose a new world, but unravels a possible politics of desire. The society of the friends of crime is, for him, the whole of society. A less aggressive or evil society than those of Sade, but only because where politics and economics have no other *raison d'être* than the production of voluptuousness or the development of all possible passions, crime cannot be defined as such, that is, as the transgression of a law. Desire is not itself transgressive in Fourier, precisely because it is the sole legislator.

The question remains open, however, of how polyamorous desire, the tree of passion, strangled, codified by the material constraints of a culture, by the process of subjectivation linked to work and language, can become the only law, and the principle of constitution of the real; how, finally, its virtual presence can become actual. It is not enough of a solution that a legislating desire that perverts and disengages the repressive syntheses that culture imposes on it, that introduces itself into that sector of the libido socially sanctioned as useful, bursting its banks, flooding it, even more, incorporating it into a broader economic-libidinal system that, so to speak, encompasses it and dissolves it in the flows of a polymorphous social economy. All of this has as a requirement the very production of the tree of passion that civilization suffocates, the fabrication of this polymorphous body that constitutes the material culture of the New World of Love. It is necessary to stimulate the passions, to unleash them where society silences them, to awaken the senses to the desires that civilization violates with all the greater force the more powerful is its emergency about being dismantled. Such is the omen to which Fourier subscribes at every step. Perhaps it is also the reason that impelled him to multiply his works, a body of writing that had for him no other *raison d'être* than the multiplication, in its turn, of the passions.

[6. The Libidinal Critique of Political Economy]

Before following this positive dimension of Fourier, which precisely suggests a political strategy of desire as subversive, it is necessary to dwell on an aspect that allows us to infer his critique of civilization. This, as has already been said, starts from a confrontation between the economic and the passional, or more exactly, from a confrontation in which the economic, the material production of modern civilization, is conceived from the point of view of desire, as a passional regime, and the passional, on the other hand, is considered as a production factor of the real. Fourier knows no other economy than the economy of desire, nor a desire that is not directly and socially productive. Nothing is more erroneous in this sense than the opinion of S. Debout according to which "Fourier produces a shift from the economic to the psychological"¹⁵. For neither the economic is preserved as such, in the sense of political economy, nor is desire conceived as a "psychological" reality. Rather, Fourier synthesizes the economic and the "psychological", if the passional is understood under this. But it would be more appropriate to say that he liquidates the realm of political economy insofar as he introduces desire into social production. For the same reason, it is absurd and only leads to the obscuring of Fourier's critique to affirm, like R. Barthes, that in the realm of Harmony "pleasure itself becomes exchange value"¹⁶. In the societal realm, desire is above all productive, and the libidinal economy is the only conceivable economy. To this same extent, Fourier breaks with the work-desire dichotomy, in which the latter appears under the sole abstract dimension of consumption. Desire is not realized as such in the consumption of the thing, but in its very production. One can think, for example, of the passionate labor of cleaning the latrines, which Fourier joyfully entrusts to the anal voluptuousness of children. This presupposes a qualitatively new conception of wealth, to which we will return later, wealth that is not in any way based on consumer goods. For desire is not satisfied in the use of the thing produced, it ignores the use value and, consequently, also the exchange value. Rather, it feeds a social device in which pleasure passes through production itself and social production is inseparable from the voluptuousness it also produces.

¹⁵ S. Debout, en *Topique*, núms. 4-5, París, 1970, p. 13.

¹⁶ R. Barthes, *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, Seuil, París, 1971, p. 89.

With this confrontation of the economic-political and the passionate, we arrive at a fundamental point of Fourier's analysis of civilization: the libidinal critique of the political economy. This perspective, which dominates the historical unfolding of reason through the aspect of the bound sensibility it presupposes, which reverses the privileging of reason, and of an essentially technical reason, over fantasy, imagination or poetry, characteristic of the *Vernunftglaube*¹⁷ of the Enlightenment, seems more familiar today in the light of the psychoanalytic theory of culture. For it has also revealed, and on a more empirical ground, the nullity of progress and that this reason historically only leads to boredom, melancholy or aggression. It has also tried to empty the containers of social, economic or political discourse into a fundamental language that underlay it, to unravel the tragic fate of the instincts that the historical process of this reason dragged with it. The same "reduction" of work, in its double spiritual and economic aspects, to the organization and the instinctual dynamics that it introduces, this reduction that brings about the Fourierian critique of *travail repugnant*, has also been a relatively common theme in the programmatic approaches of the Freudian left, which even went so far as to attempt a subversion of political economy from the point of view of instinctual dynamics, a critique of the capitalist system of production from the perspective of desire.

A first critical derivation of Fourier's libidinal analysis must refer to the concept of alienation and alienated labor. According to Marx, the alienation of labor is the result of an economic-political nexus—the economic structure of capitalist society—external to itself. It is evident that the heterogeneity between the thing produced and its social value on the market, between work time and time actually paid, between the concrete social meaning of work and its abstract appearance in the general form of the commodity, affects the very nature of this labor, estranging it, turning it into something other than what it is itself, separating it from the worker as its social bearer, who thus contemplates it as a reality alien to his own life. Now, the point of view of the critique of the economy affects this separation and transubstantiation of the intimate nature of labor, but not the specific relation to nature that it presupposes. And this on the double plane of "nature" that crosses the dialectic of the subject and the object: both that of the physical nature of the worker as a living being, and that of external nature as a dominated and controlled object, exploited by the transformative activity.

Fourier's critique of repugnant labor, or, if one prefers, the libidinal critique of political economy, has to do with an aspect that both encompasses and underlies this alienation of labor. It concerns the very activity of labor itself, considered as a biological and physiological manifestation; it refers to that unpleasant, repressive, violent and painful character that constitutes both the result of the capitalist relations of production, as well as its condition and its source. It would therefore be possible to distinguish two types of interrelated "alienation", although neither homogeneous nor historically simultaneous (although they converge, or rather, overlap in bourgeois society)¹⁸: one of them is properly capitalist alienation in the strictly economic-political sense in which Marx defines it; the second "alienation" concerns work as a repressed libidinal activity, as a certain form of the energy of desire; it refers to work as a historically specific form of coercion, violence, subjection and organization of sensibility, imagination, fantasy or desire.

This libidinal side of work enables an argument to be made regarding the Marxian critique of commodity fetishism, or more exactly, of the magical-supersensible process of the abstract general becoming of human social labor. It is about the heterogeneity that exists between use value as the embodiment or objectification of a qualitative "differential content"¹⁹ and exchange value as the expression of a pure quantitative and abstract difference relative to labor time in general. In its supersensible reality, the commodity reconciles, on the one hand, a specific and qualitative labor that creates a differentiated use value, of an object endowed with human and social utility, and, on the other hand, the general and unspecific form of labor that determines the exchange value. Therein lies its magical character that

¹⁷ Rational faith.

¹⁸ Símondon, op. cit., pp. 247 y ss.

¹⁹ K. Marx, *Das Kapital*, Europa Verlag, Frankfurt, 1968, t. I, pp. 56 y ss.

harmonizes the difference between useful and qualitatively specific work and the determination of a simple and general quantum of labor. It is in this abstraction of labor as a concrete human activity wherein lies the alienation of capitalist society, the becoming opaque of social relations, the degradation of man to a pure creature of the objectified production process.

However, if production is considered as instinctual activity, that is, as physiological activity in which "the human organism... its brain and its nerves, its muscles and its sensory organs" participate, as Marx himself marginally suggests, the concrete form of labor creating a socially transparent use value seems to unfold in turn. From the libidinal point of view, it is intensive and specific qualities of desire that pass through the process of manufacturing a product. Under this heading can be included both the coercion or repression of the body implied by the gestures of labor, the privileged forms and specializations of sensibility that pass through the process of production, and the variable intensity of the libidinal cathexis²⁰ of this process. It is at this level that the alienation of labor is defined as a physical activity that precedes or makes possible the properly economic alienation in Marx's sense. But, above all, the difference between this aspect that concerns desire and use value must be underlined. The intensive qualities of desire involved in the production of an object are independent and bear no direct relation to the social utility of the thing produced; they are heterogeneous with respect to use value. Without going into the critique of the "metaphysics of use value" that would be inscribed on the libidinal process of production by desire, it is enough to point out in this context that the utilitarian teleology that the economic imposes on the technical operations of labor, or if one prefers use value as a concrete social dimension inherent to production, "alienates", abstracts this qualitative difference in the intensities of desire.

In this regard, it is worth mentioning a story by Prosper Mérimée that perfectly illustrates these two different and even conflicting planes of desire as the energy that fuels the gestures of production and its transubstantiation into a general social value of utility. The story in question narrates a mysterious criminal affair that surprises public opinion both for the unusualness of the possible motivations for the crime and for its obstinate repetition. The story revolves around a famous jeweler, a master among all those of his time, whose works are praised for the perfect beauty of their artistic composition. But it so happens that, invariably, his clients were victims of murder soon after acquiring his precious commissions. The strange circumstance that the murderer only usurped from the victims the newly purchased jewel, even when they carried with them objects of similar or greater value, could not be explained. An atrocious maniac had to be the author of such a crime. But the clues that the police investigated in this sense proved fruitless. Moreover, the jeweler himself, a person of impeccable honesty, could not logically be implicated in that obscure case, since he was indirectly the first to be harmed by it all. The crimes were repeated in increasingly alarming situations, without any new clues being added as to the incomprehensible perpetrator. Only by chance does the reader find out, in the last pages of the story, that the multiple murderer is the jeweler.

His motives, however, remain shrouded in darkness. One would like to reassure oneself by attributing the spectacular event to an uncontrollable mania, albeit fascinating for its unusualness. The fact that this celebrated artist was sorry to part with his creations, that he delayed the delivery of his valuable commissions as long as he could, still seems a venial obsession. But the fact that he did not stop at the borders of crime seems to reveal a dark irrational background to the whole episode. Is it really an irrational act?

From the perspective considered above, the jeweler's motives do not appear so obscure: more than the echo of an irrational streak, the crime emerges as that act through which the abyss that separates the creative passion that the artist introduces in his works from their social utility is bridged. What explains this crime of passion, while defining it as a real transgression of the system of capitalist production, is the difference between the instinctual intensities involved in the creation of the work of art and its transubstantiation into a value of general utility, as an abstract coagulation of a social system of

²⁰ Conscious or unconscious investment and charging of psychic energy in an idea, object, or person.

production. And the crime, in this sense, is nothing but that act that dismantles and destroys the social relations petrified in a value of general utility, while reaffirming and reestablishing the passion and the creative jouissance in the very nature of the created work.

What has been said about use value can just as well be said about the politics that is instituted on it. For all Marxist politics have as their final *telos* the restoration of the "original transparency" of the value of concrete social utility inherent in production in its generic sense. The "free community of workers" on the basis of collective ownership of the means of production, to which *Capital* itself makes multiple references, is determined only by virtue of the fact that the product of labor acquires the sole and direct utility function of satisfying social needs. If we go from general theoretical approaches to political programmatic ones, we find in the same way that the political concept of emancipation does not cover, from this point of view, more than the realm of utilitarian work. This is all the more surprising since it can not only be attributed to the tendencies of Marxist thought more inclined to an evolutionary and reformist position—which, ultimately, respected the continuum of industrial civilization and adhered to the belief in progress as a liberator—that is, social-democratic currents and Stalinism. Rather it can also be attributed to those conceptions of Marxism that, driven by a current revolutionary crisis, emphasized subversive action and revolutionary spontaneity—such as the Spartacist League and in particular the left-communism of the 20s. And these latter positions—which, moreover, have been considered at least close to the socialist utopianism of the eighteenth century—exhausted the concept of social revolution, where they had to define it on an empirical plane, in the reappropriation of the social utility of labor through a praxis of controlling production and distribution²¹.

[7. The Grand Politics of Desire]

Faced with this diaphanous social meaning of work that constitutes the quintessence of the free community of slaves, the libidinal critique of civilization opens up the qualitative instinctual intensities that underlie the process of production. This is how Fourier understands it when he programmatically proclaims the need to multiply passions, to develop and differentiate them at the very base of social production. Against a politics founded on work as the essence of praxis, the New World of Love affirms the perversion of subjective identity and the chaos of a non-hierarchical production of passion as the beginning of a radical rupture of civilization by desire. Finally, this difference could be illustrated by paraphrasing the motto that runs like a ghost through [Marx's] *Critique of the Gotha Program*: it is not a question of each giving according to their abilities, but of giving oneself according to one's passionnal intensities, one's emotional response.

The psychoanalytic critique of culture, alluded to above, seemed to suggest in part this libidinal dimension, this Grand Politics of Desire. Without doubt this is evident, for example, in Reich's work after 1930, where he defines work as a form of sexual energy and equates its destiny with the general destiny of the latter²². But this libidinal critique was barely sketched insofar as it did not dare to translate social production in terms of desire. In a way, the approaches of the last editions of *Materialismo dialéctico* or *Psicología de las masas*²³, i.e., those in which a definitive break with Marxist politics had been established, only hint at a convergence between the emancipation of desire and the destiny of socialized labor. This is an error of principle: conceiving the libidinal "side" of production as a "subjective" or "irrational" aspect of labor, as opposed to its objective social meaning as use value production. Work thus retains the same nature that defines it within the framework of political economy, only that, in turn, the new aspect of libidinal energy that consumes and, by consuming, satisfies, is introduced. This

²¹ It is like this in the "leftist" theory of workers' councils, in the Dutch as in German radical theorists such as Korsch and Otto Rühle.

²² Cf. the enlarged edition of *Materialismo dialéctico y psicoanálisis*, 1934.

²³ Translator's note: for English editions, this probably correspond to Reich's article, "Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis," first published in 1929, and *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933).

perspective, however, shut the door for Reich's analysis to have the alternative of a productive social libidinal device, of a social libidinal economy. For from his point of view, one can only barely make out a possibility of pleasant work, as opposed to the forced and repugnant work of instrumental reason, of work that, besides fulfilling its "objective" social purpose, would satisfy the "subjective" yearnings of desire; there's only a glimpse of the possibility of libidinally gratifying work.

In this sense, the Fourierian utopia is superior to the psychoanalytic critique of civilization's malaise. To put it briefly, it introduces desire into economic production, combines its social and historical fates, where Fourier had abolished all political economy in the intensive rhythm of the social economy of desire. Suffice it to recall in this regard that passage in the *Theory of the Four Movements* in which this visionary berates the primordial ignorance, the error of principle—the *étourderie fondamentale*²⁴—of all the known sciences, and in particular of the nascent theory of economics. Your speculations on wealth are of no use, Fourier tells them, if when speaking of production you ignore, at the same time, the multiplicity and variety of the passions, wealth's only and truthful source. It is not a question, therefore, of revealing the libidinal undercurrent of the objective tasks of work, nor of "reducing" the historical-spiritual function of work to the physiological coercion that it necessarily entails, but of abolishing both with the sheer deployment of the multiplicity of the passions. Therein lies the end of the economy, the dawn of the libidinal economy.

The dawn of that new economy coincides with the splendor of a new wealth. Also in this respect, Fourier's position represents a Copernican revolution in relation to classical economics, and no less in relation to modern utopias or even to socialist politics. Since the Renaissance, the secret of social utopias, the expectant thirst for a better reality, rested on a rational organization of the economic: there were those criticisms of private property, authoritarianism, profit or arbitrariness, the impious rejections of hierarchical and unequal power. The spirit that animates the utopias of the Enlightenment or the radical ideologues of the French Revolution is no different. In the *Catechism of Equals*, as in the programs of later socialism, in Saint-Simon or Owen, in Proudhon or Weitling, "abundance for all," to use Campanella's phrase, was a function of the organization of labor. That dreamed-of wealth was not only subsidiary to the repressive order of work (later, also to the libidinal misery that it entails), which remained intact as such, but also to poverty or strictly economic "pauperism", from which it emerged as its dialectical negation; to that same pauperism which constituted an important motive of reflection for classical German philosophy, and not to a lesser extent, of Marx's socialist critique (the radical chains, the class that has nothing to lose, the critique of misery, etc.)²⁵.

Fourier's position is quite different. Poverty for him is not the result of bad social organization, but the premise of the modern conception of abundance. Misery is the necessary reverse of capitalist splendor, as Bloch says in this regard²⁶. It manifests itself precisely where the realm of political economy and work believes it verges on an exuberant social paradise, for that which ultimately defines it is social production as repression and displacement of desire, work as repugnant, in its quality of stifling physiology and ideology.

"In civilization, poverty arises from abundance," Fourier writes. Where political economy imagines wealth, it only conceives the muddy misery of a shackled body, of broken desire. Its dreams, the dreams of reason, engender nothing but monsters, for they do not know the reasons for the dream.

Nothing is more abstruse in this sense than the statement according to which "in harmony, wealth is not only kept safe, but is clothed in magnificence".²⁷ Not only is it not preserved, but it is abolished as a

²⁴ Translator: fundamental thoughtlessness.

²⁵ Cf. P. Naville, *De la alienation a la jouissance*, Anthropos, París, 1970, p. 40.

²⁶ Ernst Bloch, *op. cit.*, p. 651.

²⁷ R. Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

fundamental deception of political economy and false industry. A new "wealth" will thus be created. But this will no longer be measured according to production in the economic sense, nor to work, nor to its social organization; Nor will it be based on a desire open to consumption as unlimited as it is diverse. It will be rather the splendor of a desire that will enjoy the production of the real world and enjoy itself with making it.

* * *

[8. Fourier: Discourse and Pasional Awakening]

The infinite multiplication of passions, contrasted, associated, combined, irreplaceable and immutable, atoms whose fall and whose movement unleashes the intensities of a pure voluptuousness, that is what defines Fourier's universe, the limit of his discourse. It is true that nowhere in his work does this world acquire the unity of a systematic representation. Only—and above all in these domestic scenes of Harmony that he paints so suggestively in the *Nouveau monde amoureux*—he illustrates aspects, shreds of that other reality, not so much to try to reconstruct a mosaic, a picture of the future, but rather to seduce with the broken elements of a *bricolage* the actualization of a veiled desire.

One will look in vain for a "picture", an image that somehow represents in a unitary way that reality of the world of passion, of Harmony. Precisely in Fourier, where contempt for form and formative activity dominates! Much better to elicit this state through reverie and leisure, the vague slacker fog of a dream that awakens the complementary riches of clouded passions! How earlier he opposes that diversification of passions to the spirit of form, to that *Bildung* of desert souls, of *homo faber*!

It may seem the opposite: Fourier proposes at every step a scene, appealing in its lubricity, of the domestic life of the Harmonian. To gain followers, one could say, the same as in the *boudoir* of the *institutor immoral*.²⁸ Each of these sketches would reveal, *pars pro toto*, the whole of Harmony as a system. The utopian representation of a possible social model would thus acquire a concise but concrete form of its incalculable splendor. One could think, for example, of the Fourierian banquet as a similar illustration of an anticipatory model, perfectly adequate in this sense as an introductory anecdote to Fourier. Perhaps one could claim that in this situation in which passions multiply endlessly in the variety of tastes, flavors and manias, desire only appears in the mere form of consumption, leaving aside that essential aspect that is the articulation of desire in social production. But this is not the case. The Fourierian banquet is distinguished precisely because the refinement and diversification of tastes extends in it to all the processes of its creation and invariably includes them.

The misunderstanding of such an image lies rather in the fact that it inscribes a limit, a meaning to Fourier's text, concretely that of a positive representation of a possible world, even when it presents some original features, even when it implies a radical break with the whole of civilization. On the other hand, there is no doubt that in Fourier's work there is no lack of elements that would clearly argue in favor of this pure representation. The orientation followed here, however, is different. First of all, at no time does it try to find a system in Fourier. The system is rather what defines the civilized order, the fixed order, the fixed sciences. Everything in it is arranged around an organizing principle, a law, a perverse hierarchy. Hence its necessarily repressive character. But what Fourier opposes to this world is not an open social device, let's say one that satisfies all the manias that can be thought of, without order of distinction or rank. Nor do the situations or the everyday pictures of harmonic life in which his work expands illustrate from a partial, or if you will, oblique perspective, that libidinal world whose key is left "for later". These situations, these Fourierian tableaux, try rather to rescue the partiality and full rights of passions subject to a repressive code and stratification. For Fourier, it is a matter of reconstituting or reviving the partiality of polymorphous desire, the intensities of a passionate tree that knows no hierarchy. To produce them, to

²⁸ Translator: most likely a reference to the Marquis de Sade, especially his *Philosophy in the Bedroom*.

awaken them, constitutes the secret of the New World of Passion; only this unfolding of the passions is capable of subverting the libidinal organization of the realm of political economy, of surpassing it. Fourier's language, perhaps also his irony, thus fulfills the same functions as the immoral instructor: it constantly tends to a limit that is in no way illustrative or exemplary, nor formative, nor even anticipatory; nor is it properly a question of the dream of another reality; rather it is the forbidden joys, the unveiling of the manias and passions that are stigmatized by law, socially or culturally sanctioned, that constitute this beyond to which his work constantly extends. Evoking the voluptuousness of a passionate world, Fourier invokes these passions, arouses them. In this sense, if one had to resort to an image that summarizes his spirit, it would be preferable, rather than the scene of the banquet, to use the bed of a demoniacal first love, convulsive, destructive in the end in the frenzy of new sensations that it stimulates, heartbreaking in its lubricity, in that other song of childhood and madness into which it plunges the body of the initiate. For it is also convulsive, heartbreaking, antisocial, that production of passions that his writing arouses, it is the chaos of civilized disorder precipitated in the free flows of desire that Fourier solicits, even in spite of himself, even at the expense of his precautions against the subversive order, against the endless revolutions to which, in any case, the civilized world is condemned.

This tension between discourse and the production or awakening of desire, which constitutes its limit, also explains the idiosyncrasy of his style, the obstinate reiteration of his arguments, his scenes, his characters, the exhaustive multiplication of his volumes, the syntactic crispness of his language. It is precisely this limit of the production of passions that reverts to the book and to language, opens a gap in them, prolongs them in another discourse, unfolds them. The unveiling of new and unknown passions, he says somewhere, also requires a new language. But in no way is this demand to transcend language limited to a rhetorical device, however much Fourier also makes use of it. The very object of the book, that beyond which constitutes the production of the tree of passion and of a polymorphous desire, is what opens it to a second writing. Indeed, two fundamental types of discourse can be distinguished in Fourier's work. One of them sustains what would properly be the argument of his work, such as the lengthy accounts of societal life, the analysis of the passions that come into play in it, the criticism of the fixed sciences, of morality or of the institutions of civilization. The awakening of the passions to which it tends ends up by cracking its enclosed space, and the very language that sustains it. Just as it overflows a repressive libidinal order, that of civilization, so it constantly distends the limits of language. Desire feels locked up in them, in the book or in civilization, as in a prison; it is necessary that each step open as many gaps as possible. And the second discourse is nothing more than the reverberation of this distended limit. Fourier speaks in it of that otherness which constitutes the real liberation of desire, of its production. Hence it seems to have the character of being programmatic, anticipatory, announcing, if not, even, advertising. "How fascinating it will be for the reader to be initiated by the reading of a single work into such great mysteries!" he begins to say in the *Théorie de l'Unité Universelle*. The author foresees, warns, anticipates, promises at each move of his argumentation. "Consequently, it will be necessary to develop in the civilized numerous new fantasies and to stimulate in each individual at least a number of passions ten times higher than the current one..."²⁹ This is what constitutes the "meta-book", as R. Barthes calls it. And yet, it is not the book of the book, although it is an unfolded discourse. Nor does Fourier intend to "delay with it the definitive formulation of his doctrine"³⁰, among other things because for him there is no doctrine to formulate, but only a desire to seduce, to "stimulate". This advertiser-like discourse, this second voice, is rather the echo of these stimuli and seductions that the book opens as its otherness. The passions aroused flow back into the book, to which, moreover, they belong in a certain way; and crop up in it as this second monitoring speech.... "what you are about to read will cause... this work will reveal to you...", etc., etc., etc. It is thus not so much "a book that speaks of the book" as a book about the non-book.

²⁹ *Théorie des quatre Mouvements*, Pauvert, p. 240.

³⁰ R. Barthes, *op. cit.*, p. 95.

In the same way that it goes beyond the civilized order as a repressive libidinal organization, in the same way that it overflows language and the book, Fourier's work also insinuates itself inside the reader, inciting them mutinously, moving them intimately, leading them astray in an extravagance of passion. Ultimately it will exercise a secret and intimate terror over him. It is the key to the slight smile that your reading awakens. In this aspect less than in any other can one speak of Fourier's "utopia" as the happy dream of a possible world. More than the stage of a performance, his work is here a call to the social subversion of the free flows of desire. It is closer to the convulsive spirit of the *immoral instituter*, than to the harmonious evocation of exotic worlds of the Renaissance utopias. As in the Sadian *boudoir*, here it also seems to say *Frenchmen, one more effort to...* precipitate the passional disorder of the civilized world in the drunkenness of the polymorphic body! Perhaps therein lies the reading of Fourier as an intimate experience.

"The reader must therefore desire that I arm myself against himself, uproot his prejudices, and transport him to a new world in which unheard-of customs produce new pleasures for all ages.... Every reader must bow beforehand to my doctrine and wish for his own defeat."³¹ These words were written by Fourier, but they could also appear in the preface to *Philosophie Dans le Boudoir*. The reader is going to open himself to an experience that will pour sand into the engine of his identity, that identity that passes through a body hierarchized under the trinity of God, morality and sociability. Also with Fourier the reader must disarm themselves to fight an unequal battle in which, in the best of cases, the conquest will be their own defeat. And they must desire this defeat, for desire, the liberation of the libidinal flows to which they are called, necessarily passes through their ruin. That which must succumb, as Fourier says, is nothing other than the subject of prejudice and—one might add in agreement with him—the prejudice of the subject, of that "I" which, as we have seen above, is constituted only at the convergence of moral asphyxia and repugnant social labor. It is necessary that this subject lose and lose himself in the orderless multiplicity of the passional development that he is going to witness; he must really recognize the whims that are going to be unleashed as forces more powerful than himself, and succumb to them.

It is often said that utopia is, by its very nature, anticipatory, that its specific temporality is the future, that its character is progressive. According to this interpretation, Fourier's "utopia" seems rather "regressive". It is not a canto to the childhood of desire, but rather to the desire of childhood that takes place here and now. The subject must plunge itself over the edge and, with it, the repressive organization of the body that sustains it. This transformation is coextensive with its straying into the multiplicity of a formless desire, not yet organized, no longer subject to a given cultural order. One might say that he is trying to provoke a return to a pre-cultural stage of desire, to the disorganization and irreducible partiality of the pre-familial, "pre-oedipal" body; that only in it rests the new libidinal order of Harmony. Moreover, Fourier awakens desire to that original stage in which it is not fixed to the unity of a subject, that which psychoanalysis has called the infantile stage of the omnipotence of ideas, in the framework of which the antithesis between the ego and reality is dissolved in the passional homogeneity of the world and desire.

As such, Fourier's utopia is not a now-idle promise of a better world. It is a praxis, a present experimentation of desire, a call to all those who feel an urgency for enjoyment. This explains his rejection of all future time, of all hope in tomorrow: Do not sacrifice the present good for the future good, he writes in his *Warning to the civilized*. Enjoy the present! Avoid any association that does not satisfy your passions in the moment...!

ⁱ "Jacques Camatte and the Missing Link of Contemporary Social Criticism,"ⁱ by F. Corriente, is available here: <https://endnotes.org.uk/posts/f-corriente-jacques-camatte-and-the-missing-link-of-contemporary-social-criticism>

³¹ Le nouveau monde amoureux, p. 31. 44